

The Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission

The SEEC is a seven-member, independent panel of citizen volunteers. The Commission and its staff are responsible for administering the City of Seattle Ethics, Elections, and Whistleblower Protection Codes. Three Commissioners are appointed by the Mayor, three by the City Council, and the seventh by the other six. They are confirmed by the City Council and serve overlapping three-year terms.

The Commission is supported by a staff of six employees who provide training, investigate complaints, and issue advisory opinions.

TRAINING AND INFORMATION

Ethics training and brochures are available by request. Information is also available at the Commission website, <http://www.seattle.gov/ethics/>.

COMMISSION MEETINGS

You are invited to attend any Commission meeting. Meetings are usually the first Wednesday of the month in the Seattle Municipal Tower.

Copies of the meeting agenda, including time and location, are in our office and on our Internet web site under Commission/ Agendas and Minutes. You can also call 206-684-8500 for meeting times and locations.

The Commission encourages City Board and Commission members to call SEEC staff at 206.684.8500 for advice.



This brochure highlights portions of the Seattle Ethics Code, SMC 4.16. The complete law is on the City Clerk's Seattle Municipal Code (SMC) web site, <http://clerk.ci.seattle.wa.us/~public/code1.htm>. Copies are also available in the SEEC office.

ETHICS COMPLAINTS AND CONSEQUENCES

Anyone who feels a City officer or employee has violated the Ethics Code may complain in writing to the Ethics and Elections Commission. Commission staff will investigate whether there is a Code violation.

If it is found that a member of an advisory committee violated the City's Ethics Code, the Commission may fine that person and/or order restitution, depending on the circumstances. The Commission may fine an advisory committee member up to \$1,000 for failure to disqualify him or herself from matters in which the member has a financial or private interest, or up to \$250 for failure to disclose circumstances of impaired judgment. The Commission may fine an advisory committee member up to \$5,000 per violation of other prohibitions in the Code. The Commission may also recommend that an advisory committee member be censured or dismissed and/or that the City cancel or rescind actions influenced by the violator.



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10/2006



City of Seattle

Highlights of the Ethics Code

Seattle Municipal Code (SMC) 4.16

For Members of City Advisory Committees



This pamphlet is intended to help members of City advisory committees to understand the conduct expected of them under the Seattle Ethics Code.

SEATTLE ETHICS AND ELECTIONS COMMISSION

Your advocate for fair, open, and honest government.

Congratulations on your committee appointment! We appreciate your service to the City of Seattle. This brochure explains the City's Ethics Code and how it relates to your responsibilities as an advisory committee member. We hope you find the information helpful, and encourage you to contact us if you have any questions.



THE ETHICS CODE SEATTLE MUNICIPAL CODE ~ SMC 4.16

The Seattle Ethics Code was created to inspire public trust in City government and ensure that City officers and employees are “independent, impartial, and responsible to the people.” The law is administered by an independent commission of citizen volunteers.

The Code sets ethical standards about work activities, business relationships, and the use of City resources that apply to all City employees, elected officials, and members of most City boards and commissions.

This brochure highlights areas of the Code that relate to the activities of individuals serving on City Advisory Committees, Boards, and Commissions. The Ethics Code does not apply to members of “ad hoc” advisory committees, which are not established by law.

A copy of the full Ethics Code is available from the Ethics and Elections Commission or on line at the City Clerk's web site, <http://clerk.ci.seattle.wa.us/~public/code1.htm>.

ETHICS CODE HIGHLIGHTS

FINANCIAL CONFLICTS

You must disqualify yourself from Committee matters in which you have a direct or indirect **financial interest**. SMC 4.16.070 (6)(a)

You cannot act on transactions involving **current or former partners or clients**, for twelve months after ending the relationship, SMC 4.16.070(1)(c)

You must disclose your interests in City contracts. SMC 4.16.070(1)(d)

APPEARANCE OF CONFLICT

If you engage or have engaged in transactions or activities that would appear to be in conflict with your official duties or which would appear to **impair your independence of judgment**, you must fully disclose the facts to your committee and to the SEEC in writing prior to engaging in such duties. SMC 4.16.070 (6)

USE OF POSITION

You cannot **assist others in City transactions** when your committee position would appear to give you an unfair “inside track.” SMC 4.16.070(2)(c)

Generally, you cannot use your City title when supporting or endorsing a product or service. When acting in this manner, you should not identify yourself by your City position or association. SMC 4.16.070(2)(a)

PRIVILEGED INFORMATION

You cannot disclose or use any proprietary or confidential information gained through your official position on the board. SMC 4.16.070(4)

CITY FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

City resources—including telephones, equipment, office space, stationery, and staff—are to be used for City purposes. These and other City resources should not be used for purposes other than those related to the function, duties, and responsibilities of your committee. SMC 4.16.070(2)(b)

GIFTS OR ITEMS OF VALUE

Generally speaking, you may not solicit or accept anything of value from individuals with an interest in your board's work. SMC 4.16.070(3)



AFTER LEAVING CITY APPOINTMENT

You must wait one year after leaving your City appointment before you can (i) assist others in proceedings involving your former agency, (ii) assist or represent others on matters in which you were officially involved, or (iii) compete for contracts when you helped determine the scope of work or the process for selecting a contractor. The word “proceeding” is defined in the Code and will generally not be within the normal responsibilities of advisory committee members. SMC 4.16.075 and 4.16.030(M)

These highlights are a general summary of the Ethics Code as it applies to members of City of Seattle advisory committees. If you have a specific issue, have questions, or need additional help, please contact the Executive Director.